

the internal characteristic being a perpetual
semblance of
hitting the right nail on the head without the
reality. And
I call it middle-class Macaulayese, because it
has these
faults without the compensation of great
studies and of
conversance with great affairs, by which
Macaulay partly
redeemed them/ ¹

Macaulay, who was a very honest critic of
himself,
recognised the defects of his own style,
especially when he
saw them reflected in the pages of other
writers. He
wrote in his journal, about 1856 : ' I looked
through 's
two volumes. He is, I see, an imitator of me.
But I am a
very unsafe model. My manner is, I think, and
the world
thinks, on the whole a good one ; but it is
very near to a
very bad manner indeed, and those
characteristics of my
style which are most easily copied are the
most question-
able/ ²

He felt that the language of history ought to
preserve a
certain dignity,³ and he lived up to the
standards he set.
There may be a few passages which an austere
critic would
consider flippant, and there are instances in
which he
adopts for a moment a familiar and colloquial
mode of
speech. But his inclination is to use a
swelling phrase
when a plainer and more natural one would
often be pre-
ferable. At times he exposes himself to the
censure he
bestows on Tacitus and ' stimulates till
stimulants lose

their force'. Exaggeration and excessive emphasis are his besetting sins, and he was either unconscious of those defects or deliberately closed his eyes to them. Over-emphasis often wearies the reader by the sense of strain and effort which it gives: in Macaulay's case the style seems to express the naturally exuberant vitality and

¹ Friendship's Garland (1871 ed.), p. 71.

² Trevelyan, ii. 452. ³ Ibid. p. 108.